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SOCIETY



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN RUSSIA AND THE BALTIC COUNTRIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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In this study, we examine the current state and prospects of inclusive education for learners with special needs and disabilities in the countries of the Baltic region (Poland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Norway, and Russia). We present a SWOT analysis of the development of inclusive education in different countries and analyse its strengths and weaknesses, risks, threats, and challenges from a political, economic, and technological perspective. In our analysis, we dissociate the issue of inclusive education from the problem of teaching learners with disabilities and examine the political, economic, social, and technological aspects of the environment that affect the educational situation of learners with disabilities. We consider inclusive education in the context of the documents of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education – an active educational institution that facilitates the preparation and adaptation of all learners to life in complex multicultural and integrated societies through rights, freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. Our analysis of inclusive education trends relies on the assessment of the goals and objectives, accessibility, and socio-cultural and economic feasibility of inclusive educational systems. We stress political, socio-cultural, and technological differences in practices, dynamics, and prospects for inclusive education in the Baltic region countries and Russia.

Keywords: inclusive education, special education, special educational needs, compassion-based approach (charity), isolation-based approach (segregation), socio-cultural efficiency-based approach (inclusion and integration)

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Introduction

Socio-cultural evolution, scientific and technological progress in the XX century led to a change in the demographic composition of the population. One of the consequences was an increase in the number of children with disabilities worldwide. According to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, between 1.11 % and 17.47 % of school-age learners with disabilities were registered in thirty countries in 2017. For example, in the Baltic countries: more than 3 % in Poland, 5 % in Germany and Denmark, 6 % in Latvia, 8 % in Estonia and Norway, about 12 % in Lithuania. The average for the European countries is 4.53 %¹.

Russia is no exception: today the status of a child with disabilities (CWD), or children with special needs (CSN), or special education needs (SEN), has more than 651,000 children (2.4 %)².

The life and fate of these children almost two hundred years ago ceased to be exclusive precedents and set the states and societies before the need to solve the problems of socialization, adaptation to the social and economic conditions of life of persons with disabilities. One of the main mechanisms for solving the problems posed is the education system.

Several divergent attitudes have been historically manifested posing political, economic, sociocultural and technological aspects with regard to the issue [1]. Each of the opposing attitudes and positions has strengths and weaknesses, creates opportunities and reveals perspectives for the disabled. Each of them conceals threats and risks for subjects of education with special needs and society as a whole.

The purpose of this study is to analyze antagonistic viewpoints in terms of assessing the state and attractiveness of special and inclusive education for different education stakeholders by identifying the strengths and advantages of each of the educational attitudes for learners with disabilities, as well as a description of the possible negative consequences associated with them in the context of the overall situation in the educational sector in Russia and the Baltic region countries. The results of this analysis can serve as a reason for reflection not only for scholars who evaluate the structure and functioning of public institutions but also for politicians and economists who make strategic decisions in the field of education.

Methods of research

To assess the state and attractiveness of different education systems for learners with special needs and disabilities, we have chosen and adapted the SWOT-analysis method. The choice stems from the fact that this fairly

¹ Inclusive education for learners with disabilities. Petitions. European Agency, 2017. Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses> (accessed 12.05.2018).

² *Uroven' invalidizatsii v Rossiyskoy Federatsii. GIS Federal'noy sluzhby gosudarstvennoy statistiki* [The level of disability in the Russian Federation. In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service], available at: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/statistics/population/disabilities (accessed 13.04.2018) (In Russ.).

universal flexible method with a free selection of the analyzed elements, used in the strategic management of various spheres of public life, allows us to give a structured description of the situation regarding which decisions need to be made. In this case, the object of the SWOT-analysis comprises different positions with regard to the education of CWDs. A SWOT analysis is known as an effective method for an overall assessment of the current situation in the context of the strengths and weaknesses of individual positions and attitudes, as well as the threats and risks associated with them, although it cannot replace the development of a strategy. Therefore, this study does not assess individual phenomena of the situation of CWDs and CSNs in schools in Russia, as well as the development of specific measures to strengthen the weaknesses and eliminate the threats.

In an effort to more clearly present the context for the development of education for CWDs and CSN, we adapted the PEST analysis to identify political (Political), economic (Economic), social (Social) and technological (Technological) aspects of the external environment that affect the situation in the educational sector for learners with disabilities. The political and economic aspects are outlined because they influence the acquisition of key resources for the education of learners with disabilities at the state level. However, in our opinion, the core of different positions and attitudes in relation to the education of learners with disabilities is consumer preferences, i. e. attractiveness for education stakeholders. They are represented with the social component of the PEST analysis. An equally important factor is the technology component, which reveals the trends in technological support for the development of education for learners with disabilities and their connection with unattractiveness. This component also indicates the prospects for the introduction of new education formats.

The use of these methods allowed us to distinguish several generalized categories of the analysis as attitudes. The attitude, in this case, refers to the orientation of the state, society (in general, and the subjects of education in particular), which is reflected in the attitude towards the education of learners with disabilities. Due to the many-sided and multidimensional attitudes regarding the education of learners with disabilities, we conditionally referred to such approaches as compassion-based attitude (charity), isolation-based attitude (segregation), and socio-cultural efficiency-based attitude (inclusion and integration). The introduction of these generalized concepts is due to the need to analyze the merits, weaknesses and risks, as well as the prospects for special (remedial) and inclusive education in a particular socio-political, economic and cultural context.

A compassion-based attitude in the Baltic region countries and Russia regarding learners with special needs and disabilities: strengths and weaknesses

Compassion in education historically arose earlier than the rest (in the XVIII-XIX centuries) as a reflection of the principle of altruism in the public consciousness in its utilitarian sense. It was aimed at providing compassionate treatment for the education of CSN, regardless of their limitations in health and development. Education was focused on teaching basic skills for better employment opportunities and social adaptation in society.



The declaration of good intentions from the socio-cultural point of view seemed to be rather attractive, but the political, economic and technological aspects of charitable education were clearly weak. The schemes of the state and society did not include ensuring equal rights and opportunities for this category of people. Charity and state funding provided only minimal educational inquiries. The problems of obtaining a quality education and assistance in the development of abilities, social autonomy and citizenship were not on the agenda and remained unresolved. Pedagogical approaches and educational technologies remained the lot of single-player enthusiasts and were not widely used.

With undoubted progress, compared to the previous century, with regard to the state and society to people with disabilities and CSN, such a position latently resulted in discrimination of rights and restriction of access to education and career of people with special needs, often deprived them of opportunities to become full citizens. Moreover, attitudes towards children with developmental disabilities in some (even civilized) countries have acquired cruel and violent forms [2, p. 154].

Modern adherents of compassion attitudes, as a rule, often organize themselves in the form of social movements, get support and financing from charities, individuals, or public grants for implementing educational projects with the participation of learners with disabilities. The most significant expenditures for such items are envisaged in the budgets of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, being countries with a higher quality of life. Educational projects and support for teachers in both primary and secondary education in Sweden regarding inclusion have been substantial for many years and these actions have been carried out in cooperation with organizations with a specialization in teaching and learning about special needs, such as for instance, The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools in Sweden (*Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten*)³.

In Russia, half of all households with persons with disabilities have a high incidence of poverty and can afford only food and clothing⁴. Low financial status significantly limits the ability to support learners with SEN and leaves CWDs without access to higher education, and sometimes even to secondary vocational education.

Another weakness of compassion attitude in the education system nowadays is that the increasing financial support for children and adults with disabilities in terms of state pensions and benefits in these respective countries does not contribute to their desire to obtain professional

³ *Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten* [The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools in Sweden], available at: www.spsm.se (accessed 23.06.2018) (In Swed. and Engl.).

⁴ *Kompleksnoye nablyudeniye usloviy zhizni naseleniya v 2014 godu, v protsen-takh*. GIS Federal'nyy reyestr invalidov [Comprehensive Observation of Living Conditions of Population in 2014, as a percentage. In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service, The Federal Register of Disabled People], available at: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/invalid/tab3-8.htm (accessed 20.04.2018) (In Russ.).

education and economic independence. In Russia, only 25 % of disabled people of working age are employed, and only half of them are involved in local communities and are willing to lead an independent way of life⁵.

At the risk of causing criticism, we will state the thesis that the attitude of compassion is legitimate and constructive for a very narrow category of CWDs in the first and second categories who have significant intellectual difficulties and are not capable of mastering the basic curriculum. As for the rest of learners with disabilities, the dynamics of development of higher mental functions (attention, memory, thinking, imagination, speech) in many CWDs may differ from the average statistical rate. For example, due to visual and hearing impairments, central nervous system or behavioural disorders, they may require more time and the application of special interdisciplinary methods for stimulating the development of speech and thinking.

But creating conditions for meeting special educational needs allows most CWDs and learners with SEN to complete their education, and get a profession and a social status. That is what, in fact, the whole history of defectology proves [3–5].

Compassion for many learners with disabilities creates low aspirations, acquired helplessness and consumerist behaviour patterns. It also does not actualize the need to use such upward mobility as vocational education. This is a vicious cycle of poverty when poor families cannot provide their CWDs with vocational education. They live on the dole, rely on public assistance and have no lifestyle choices.

Special education: the contradiction between technological adaptability and socio-cultural and economic efficiency

An increase in public awareness, a greater understanding of weaknesses of education endowments and attempts to solve these problems at the state level have led to the transformation of compassion attitude into institutional support of the education of learners with disabilities⁶ in the form of a special (remedial) education system. The emergence of special

⁵ *Trud i zanyatost' invalidov. Samostoyatel'nyy obraz zhizni i vovlechennost' v mestnoye soobshchestvo. GIS Federal'noy sluzhby gosudarstvennoy statistiki* [Labor and employment of disabled people. Independent way of life and involvement in the local community In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service], available at: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/disabilities (accessed 20.04.2018) (In Russ.).

⁶ *Federal'nyy zakon Rossiyskoy Federatsii "Ob obrazovanii v Rossiyskoy Federatsii"*, No. 273-FZ (v red. Federal'nykh zakonov ot 07.05.2013, No. 99-FZ, ot 23.07.2013 N 203-FZ) [Federal Law of the Russian Federation "On Education in the Russian Federation", No. 273-FZ (amended by Federal Law, No. 99-FZ of 07.05.2013, No. 203-FZ of July 23, 2013)], available at: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/ (accessed 01.05.2018).



education is attributed to the 1760s and 1780s, and the genuine recognition and development were received in the XX century⁷ [6; 7].

Paradoxically, the desire for unification of universal primary and then secondary education has stipulated the need for differentiation. Technological support of educational programs and methods requires correction of imbalances in terms of levels and characteristics of intelligence, sensory systems, physical and psychological status of learners in general. The complexity of the programs required significant financial costs for teacher training, the design of specialized facilities and equipment, the detention and treatment of children at all specialized custodial institutions, specialized and boarding schools and in closed settings⁸. This specificity has led to the isolation of special (remedial) education into a separate niche.

The attitude of isolation in the education of learners with disabilities is highly relevant; and in Russia, there are many adepts of it among teachers and parents. They advocate the system of teaching CSN in specialized narrowly focused institutions, especially for learners with visual and hearing impairments, locomotory system disorders, developmental delays, etc., on the basis of differentiating learners with disabilities by the type of special needs and separating them from other learners. Such institutions quite successfully compensate for health restrictions and disorders in the process of training with the help of highly qualified specialists and special educational technologies.

The benefit of isolation attitude is the support of special education services for parents of CSN. Many of them, due to their low financial and economic status, find it very difficult to leave work to attend to their child. The educational institution in this situation fulfils not only an educational function but also a function of social support, allowing parents to work and participate in social life.

Another strength of isolation attitude in special education is the progress in the intellectual development of learners with disabilities through adaptive programs. However, a comparison of the level and quality of

⁷ *Federal'nyy zakon ot 24 noyabrya 1995 g., No. 181-FZ "O sotsial'noy zashchite invalidov v Rossiyskoy Federatsii"* [Federal Law of November 24, 1995, No. 181-FZ "On the social protection of disabled people in the Russian Federation"], available at: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_8559/ (accessed 01.05.2018).

⁸ *Trebovaniya k organizatsii obrazovatel'nogo protsessa dlya obucheniya invalidov i lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami zdorov'ya v professional'nykh obrazovatel'nykh organizatsiyakh, v tom chisle osnashchennosti obrazovatel'nogo protsessa. Pis'mo Departamenta podgotovki rabochikh kadrov i DPO Ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki Rossiyskoy Federatsii 18 marta 2014 g. N 06-281* [Requirements for the organization of the educational process for the education of disabled people and persons with disabilities in professional educational organizations, including the provision of an educational process. Letter of the Department for the Training of Personnel and Additional Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, March 18, 2014, No. 06-281], available at: http://www.mubint.ru/disabl/normativnye_dokumenty/Pismo_Minobrnauki_Rossii_ot_18.03.2014_g_N_06-281.pdf (accessed 01.03.2018). (In Russ.).



competences of graduates of special and mass schools disproves this assertion. The majority of applicants with SEN who are eager to get a degree, with rare exceptions, have low Unified State Examination scores and enter the university on a preferential basis. The total number of learners with SEN in Russia who completed a course of vocational training in 2017 comprised less than 5000 people. It amounted to 8.5 % of young people between 18 and 30 years of age⁹. Statistics indicate a decline in the number of people receiving higher and secondary vocational education¹⁰.

The result is quite understandable. Special (remedial) education in Russia nowadays, in accordance with the one 30–50 years ago in the Baltic Countries, is based on a differentiated approach, taking into account the potential and capacities of learners. Special psychological and pedagogical conditions are created: facilitative modes of study and leisure activities, extended periods of training, a significant change in the content of curricula and training programs, a reduced degree of complexity in the delivery of educational material, with the particular emphasis on acquiring social and day-to-day skills, rather than mastering a complete training program.

According to the Federal State Educational Standards for special education in Russia, the fundamental purpose and the main result of education is the general cultural and personal development of the learner. "Personal results include mastering social (vital) competences, which are necessary for solving practice-oriented tasks to ensure conditioning social attitudes of learners, the motivation for learning and active insight"¹¹. The requirements for curriculum outcomes are differentiated depending on the degree of special needs. In relation to learners with various special needs and health risks, complex health disorders, the real possibility to achieve the maximum possible life skills and accessible academic success on an individual rehabilitation program is legislatively underpinned.

⁹ *Obrazovaniye invalidov. GIS Federal'noy sluzhby gosudarstvennoy statistiki* [Education of disabled people. In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service, The Federal Register of Disabled People], available at: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/disabilities/# (accessed 30.04.2018) (In Russ.).

¹⁰ *Chislennost' invalidov, poluchivshikh vyssheye i sredneye professional'noye obrazovaniye na 01.01.2018. Federal'nyy reyestr invalidov* [Number of disabled people who received higher and secondary vocational education as of 01.01.2018. In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service, The Federal Register of Disabled People], available at: <https://sfri.ru/stat> (accessed 30.04.2018) (In Russ.).

¹¹ *Prikaz ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki RF №1599 ot 19.12.2014 "Ob utverzhdenii federal'nogo gosudarstvennogo obrazovatel'nogo standarta obrazovaniya obuchayushchikhsya s umstvennoy otstalost'yu (intellektual'nyimi narusheniyami)"* [Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, No. 1599 of December 19, 2014, "On approval of the federal state educational standard of education for students with mental retardation (intellectual disabilities)], available at: <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70760670/>, pp. 27-28 (accessed 30.04.2018) (In Russ.).



In other words, special education offers equal opportunities for CSN at the legislative level by providing specially organized educational services in a sufficiently separate system of educational institutions. In addition, isolation attitude plays the role of social support for families who have learners with disabilities. The issue of personal development, socialization and equal rights of CSN seems to be very controversial.

The advocates of remedial education ignore the fact that children are under conditions of their micro-society and overprotective teachers. They do not interact with their peers from regular classes and are often isolated from the family. This segregation leads to significant difficulties in communication in the public, in socio-economic adaptation and in career choices after leaving school. Graduates of specialized schools are socially infantile and require continuing guardianship and support.

Special difficulties are caused by vocational training and employment because the number of special educational institutions for vocational training is very limited. According to the Federal Register for the Disabled, employed people with disabilities of working age in Russia comprise 25.7 %¹². A number of jobs for people with disabilities who haven't undergone any vocational training are also limited.

In search of opportunities for solving this problem through the means of the education system, public organizations and volunteers from 46 countries, including Russia, have joined the unique international non-profit movement "Abilimpix". The movement is trying to provide relevant vocational guidance, to strengthen the motivation of learners with disabilities to obtain vocational training, to promote their employment and sociocultural inclusion in society. To create awareness and promote vocational training for learners with disabilities, the popularization of best practices and the development of professional standards for special education are used throughout the world. In the Russian Federation alone, there have been about a hundred regional and four National professional skills competitions among learners with disabilities¹³. Indeed, 94.7 % of those participating in the Abilimpix championship in 2017 are employed or continue to study¹⁴. In assessing the prospects, we draw attention to the master classes planned

¹² *Kolichestvo rabotayushchikh invalidov trudosposobnogo vozrasta. Statistika. Analitika. Federal'nyy reyestr invalidov* [Number of disabled workers of working age. Statistics. Analytics. In: State Information System of the Federal State Statistics Service, The Federal Register of Disabled People], available at: <https://sfri.ru/stat> (accessed 01.03.2018) (In Russ.).

¹³ *Natsional'nyy chempionat po professional'nomu masterstvu dlya lyudey s invalidnost'yu "Abilimpiks"* [National championship on professional skills for people with disabilities "Abilimpix"], available at: <https://abilympi cspro.ru/centers/national-center> (accessed 19.05.2018) (In Russ.).

¹⁴ *Federal'nyy reyestr invalidov. Mezhdunarodnoye nekommercheskoye dvizheniye "Abilimpiks", 06 oktyabrya 2017* [the Federal Register of Disabled Persons. International non-commercial movement "Abilimpix", October 6, 2017], available at: https://sfri.ru/news/_abilympics pro/~ 2017/10/06/21 (accessed 29.04.2018) (In Russ.).

within the framework of the IV Moscow Championship: competitions in professional competencies, master classes on baking, crocheting, needle knitting, carving, confectionery, macrame, massage, and aesthetic cosmetology¹⁵. Obviously, special education continuously attempts to perform an adaptive function, although its efficiency is not high enough.

Thus, the strong technological side of special education is at odds with weak socio-cultural opportunities and economic viability. There is also a political controversy: special education, on the one hand, ensures the right to education guaranteed by the constitution, since it compensates for health for the development of intelligence and cognitive skills. And on the other hand, it restricts the civil rights of learners with SEN, creates barriers for the socialization of special schools leavers, barriers for building a route for vocational training, career and autonomous life. The presence of these contradictions indicates the ineffectiveness of the isolated education attitude towards learners with disabilities [8, p.51 – 54; 9, p. 152 – 174].

Inclusive education: feasibility and the economic perspective

In the Baltic Countries almost 50 years ago, the choice was made in the direction of ensuring civil rights¹⁶. The isolated education attitude towards learners with disabilities has lost its appeal to the European ideologists of social development and is not widespread. For example, the ratio of learners with disabilities going to special schools in Sweden is only 1 %, in Denmark it is 2 %, in Estonia it is slightly more than 3 %, in Germany and Latvia – less than 4 %, and in Norway less than 1 %¹⁷. The utilitarian nature of special education has ceased to be a priority and given way to the functions of socializing learners with disabilities and integrating them into society as equal citizens.

Politicians, economists and sociologists 'promote' the model of education for learners with disabilities, which can be characterized as an attitude of socio-cultural expediency. Expediency seems to correlate the political, social and cultural goals of society with the ways of achieving them with the help of education as an upward mobility mechanism. At the present stage of social development, this attitude has been developed into the concept of inclusive education and integration of learners with disabilities into the system of pre-school, primary education, general secondary and higher education.

¹⁵ *Abilimpiks*, 2018 [Abilimpix, 2018], available at: http://abilympics.moscow/news/ID_56.html (accessed 19.05.2018) (In Russ.).

¹⁶ *Deklaratsiya o pravakh invalidov. Prinyata rezolyutsiyey 3447 (XXX) Generalnoy Assamblei ot 9 dekabrya 1975 goda* [The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (Resolution 3447 (XXX) of 9 Dec. 1975) proclaimed by UN General Assembly], available at: http://www.un.org/en/documents/decl_conv/declarations/disabled.shtml (accessed 30.04.2018) (In Russ.).

¹⁷ Inclusive education for learners with disabilities. Petitions. European Agency, 2017. Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses> (accessed 12.05.2018).



As stated in the petition of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: "The ultimate vision of inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful quality educational opportunities in their local community with their friends and peers"¹⁸. The goal is to fundamentally convert the policy and technologies of education into the practices of teaching and support. Instead of isolating and grouping children according to the nature and extent of the disability, the education system must acquire the ability to respond to the diverse needs of learners without the need for their categorization, labelling and stigmatization. Leading-edge ideas and basic concepts of inclusive education advocated by G. Feuser, A. Sander, H. Reiser, U. Haeberlin, O. Speck, S.V. Alekhina, T.A. Basilova, V.I. Lubovsky, T.V. Furlyaeva, each in their own way, are resorted not only to the content of education but rather to the social reality and social function of education, the need to form an inclusive educational culture [9, p. 152–174; 10–14].

Thus, inclusive education in schools must compensate for different starting positions, rather than individual weaknesses of learners¹⁹. This principle is an absolute breakthrough in the education of learners with disabilities and SEN, as it brings society to a new socio-cultural level of development, and opens up further opportunities and prospects for the development of pedagogical innovations.

The humane worldview and the principles of equality on which inclusive education is based ensure the developmental goals that are declared in the constitutions of all civilized countries, the Declaration of Human Rights and other UN documents, and are considered to be the fundamental strength of the attitude of socio-economic expediency.

It should be understood that the socio-cultural expediency of inclusive education has become possible, thanks to the development of its technological components: new digital communication technologies, databases and the Internet. For example, modern technologies for presenting the content for learners with visual and hearing impairments, locomotory system disorders, as well as the required special facilities and equipment may well be mastered by teachers of the regular schools or by teachers of special classes integrated into mainstream educational institutions. In this connection, it is necessary to introduce modules and blocks of disciplines on inclusive education and education of learners with disabilities in the integrative training programs in higher education for specialists in the field of pedagogical and psychological studies [15; 16].

¹⁸ Inclusive education for learners with disabilities // European Parliament Committees. URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/supporting-analyses-search.html> (дата обращения: 23.04.2018).

¹⁹ *Gosudarstvennaya programma Rossiyskoy Federatsii "Dostupnaya sreda" na 2011–2015 gody, utverzhdenная postanovleniyem Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 17 marta 2011, No. 175* [The State Program of the Russian Federation "Accessible Environment" for 2011–2015, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation, No. 175 of March 17, 2011], available at: <http://base.garant.ru/12184011/> (accessed 19.05.2018).

Socio-cultural efficiency has economic prospects. They consist of the possibility of reducing the level of psychological helplessness, expanding flexible career choices among learners with disabilities, and broadening the ability to be integrated into economic relations through the development of social networks of educational communities.

This begs the question, why did not the system of inclusive education, with all the socio-cultural and even economic expediency, develop until the 21st century? The fact is that it has a number of weaknesses. They were identified in the middle of the XIX century, when the first officially mentioned attempts of performing joint teaching of children with learning disabilities and their peers in regular classes were undertaken in France, Great Britain and Germany [17].

Despite the fact that the idea was supported by governments, advocates of integrating the hearing-impaired children into the lessons of the non-impaired children in the primary and secondary school faced severe resistance from teachers of special education and parents of learners. Teachers saw in it the incentive to find ways to economize on the education of learners with disabilities at the expense of quality and learning environment. In addition, regular schools lacked the necessary facilities and equipment, and teachers did not possess special educational technologies for teaching learners with disabilities.

Parents of learners with SEN in different countries were concerned that CWDs could not master a complete training program with their peers. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that learners with disabilities remained in the care of the family, which created additional financial and social difficulties.

Similar arguments are still used today by supporters of the special education system and opponents of the inclusion and integration of learners with disabilities. According to the research of A.-J. Resch, G. Mireles, M.-R. Benz, C. Grenvelge, R. Peterson, D. Zhang, nowadays the main reasons, which threaten the well-being and peace of the parents of learners with disabilities, are the information deficit, limited access to social services, the discrepancies between real incomes and necessary expenses, poor inclusion in the mainstream educational and social environment [18]. The same problems are seen by Russian parents of learners with disabilities [19].

Russia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was approved by the general public. However, the attitude of educators and the public towards inclusive education has not changed much in the last hundred years. Trying to allay public concerns, the pedagogical community and parents, the Minister of Education O. V. Vasilieva was forced to officially assure that "... there will be the same number of remedial schools, as many as 1764 in the future, and their funding will continue... Simultaneously, more than 11,000 general secondary schools have taken learners for inclusive education. This is a very great achievement, there are 367,000 children"²⁰. In fact, the first steps towards inclusion are very modest, since the system of general secondary education in the

²⁰ *Roditel'skoye sobraniye vedet ministr* [The Parental Meeting is Held by the Minister], available at: <https://rg.ru/2017/08/30/glava-minobrnau-ki-provela-vserossijskoe-roditelskoe-sobranie.html> (accessed 30.04.2018) (In Russ.).



Russian Federation comprises more than 41,100 educational institutions. And inclusion coverage of less than 27 % is difficult to consider an achievement²¹.

The weak side of inclusive education in Russia is not only the limited dynamics of its prevalence. S. V. Alekhina, E. V. Kulagina, N. N. Malofeev and other Russian scientists who study the problems of inclusive education agree that, despite the epoch-making significance of the adopted governmental programs and plans, the obvious progress of inclusion, the gap between the real educational practice, goals and opportunities remain quite significant [20; 21 – 23].

Research conducted at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Kaliningrad) in 2012 – 2016 revealed an insufficient level of psychological and professional readiness of teachers for learners with disabilities. And the inadequacy is inherent in all the components of commitment and willingness to work in an inclusive educational environment: they all lack cognitive, emotional-evaluative, motivational, reflexive and communicative abilities. It affects the nature of communication and interaction with all the participants in the inclusive educational space [24].

The institution of tutoring for the socio-psychological and pedagogical support of inclusion is not yet functioning. In Russia the professional standard for specialists in the area of upbringing and education²², which regulates the tutor's work on the development and selection of methodological tools for conditioning open, variable, adapted educational environment for learners with disabilities, was approved by the government in January 2017. With its introduction, professional inclusive educational environment has emerged to start its further establishment²³.

In the EU, according to a study organized by DLA Piper in 2017 and conducted at the request of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the weakest side of inclusive education is its legal provision and protection. Threats and obstacles for inclusion are

²¹ *Obrazovaniye v 2017 godu (po dannym Ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki Rossiyskoy Federatsii na nachalo uchebnogo goda). Federal'naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoy statistiki* [Education in 2017 (according to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation at the beginning of the school year). In: Federal State Statistics Service], available at: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/education (accessed 12.10.2018) (In Russ.).

²² *Professional'nyy standart «Spetsialist v oblasti vospitaniya» (utv. prikazom Ministerstva truda i sotsial'noy zashchity RF ot 10 yanvarya 2017 g. № 10n)* [Professional standard: Specialist in the field of education (approved by order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation. No. 10n of January 10, 2017)], available at: <http://www.garant.ru/pro dukts/ipo/prime/doc/71495630/#ixzz5FxnHzYfc> (accessed 19.05.2018) (In Russ.).

²³ *Obrazovaniye bez granits: informatsionno-metodicheskiy portal po inklyuzivnomu i spetsial'nomu obrazovaniyu* [Education without Borders: information and methodological portal on inclusive and special education], available at: <http://window.edu.ru/resource/946/77946> (accessed 19.05. 2018) (In Russ.).

grouped under four themes [25]: 1) lack of information on how to challenge the denial of violation of the right to education among persons with disabilities; 2) difficulties in obtaining legal aid in cases brought against schools or public administrations, including formal and informal procedural barriers for appeals on denial of inclusive education, etc. 3) individual legal protection necessary for children with disabilities and their parents or guardians from victimization and stigmatization in the process of upholding the right to inclusive education. This comprises "... threats of deprivation of parental rights by the school or state authorities; threats of humiliation by schools or state administrations; beliefs of parents or legal guardians of children with disabilities that it is unfair to give more attention to learners with disabilities in the classroom towards other school children; pressure by parents of other children on parents or legal guardians of a child with a disability against enrolling a child in school; applying medical-sounding labels to children with disabilities on the basis of medical disability models, etc."; 4) lack of independent, effective, accessible, understandable, safe and enforceable mechanisms for handling complaints and remedies with the Ombudsman's decisions being recommendatory and not legally binding and influential.

Conclusions

Inclusive and special education in Russia and in the Baltic region countries at the present stage consists of two separate subsystems of education. The first one is a developing open dynamic system that is evolving on the basis of resolving contradictions between good intentions and the actual state of this system, overcoming the imperfection of technological support, formalism, the resistance of some parents, and insufficient level of psychological and professional readiness of teachers to train and educate CSN. Functionally inclusive education is focused on the adaptation and training of all learners, and not only with SEN, to vital activities in complex multicultural and integrated societies based on ensuring the rights, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.

The second subsystem – special (remedial) education – is rather isolated due to the high degree of differentiation of the educational programs, and the need for high-tech psychological and pedagogical support. Prospects for its development are determined by the possibilities of using the achievements of scientific and technological progress in the field of high-tech equipment (prosthetics, implantation, etc.) and information technologies. Functionally, it is intended for a rather narrow enrolment of CSN and has a tendency to reduce the number of learners due to the difficulties of their socialization and professionalization after they have completed general secondary education.

Both subsystems are the result of historically established approaches regarding the education of people with disabilities: the attitudes of socio-cultural efficiency (inclusion and integration) of learners with SEN, the attitude of compassion (charity), the attitude of isolation (segregation).

Comparative analysis of strengths and weaknesses, perspectives and threats arising in the organization of education for learners with disabili-



ties in Russia and the Baltic Countries shows that at present the attitude of isolation is more attractive for the Russian population with remedial education of learners with disabilities in special institutions. Socially and culturally appropriate inclusive education is developing slowly because the political will of the government faces numerous difficulties in overcoming open resistance of parents, veiled resistance of the pedagogical community, and the imperfection of special technological support for mainstream schools.

In the Baltic Countries, a different situation has developed. Inclusive education is prioritized for all children in mainstream educational settings, and schools and curricula are ensured to be adaptable and accessible to all learners with disabilities. Latent resistance to inclusion is observed by educational institutions and local administrations. The current and general view in Sweden, for instance, is that isolated education of children is to be avoided in favour of inclusion and integration both at class- and school-level and is possible even though there are challenges with it. The attitude is that making the learning processes as effective as possible is the goal and the overall social situation for an individual child is also to be considered to be significant in the decision-making.

It should be understood that there will always be a certain percentage of CSN who are not capable of learning, or who are able to master only the simplest self-organization skills. Therefore, the attitude of charity and isolation will remain relevant in the educational system, and no expediency and economy should dominate in making political and economic decisions regarding the education of such learners.

Notwithstanding the above, the generalized spread of inclusive education is quite high. The cause for optimism is, first of all, humanistic tendencies and axiological orientations in the educational environment and, secondly, the progress of technological and communicative technologies that prevent the development of a number of barriers in the education and upbringing of learners with SEN.

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